

The Timothy Mills House  
27 Mills Street  
Morristown, Morris County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-632

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer  
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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Owner: Robertson D. Searles (1910)

Date of Erection: Circa 1740

Architect:

Builder: Timothy Mills (1718-1803)

Present Condition: Original except for some changes  
to partitions and additions to  
east end

Number of Stories: One and one-half with basement

Materials of Construction: Foundation - stone masonry

Exterior walls - timber  
frame

Interior walls - lath  
and plaster on studding

Chimneys - brick, built  
against inside of gable  
ends

Roof - gable without  
dormers; roofing not  
original

Historical Data:

This house is found at number 27 Mills  
Street, with its northwest rear corner in the  
inside line of the modern sidewalk on the southeast  
side of that street, being within the northwest  
boundary of the borough of Morristown.

The history and identification of a house being integral with those of its builder and successive owners, it appears that one Captain Timothy Mills born in 1718 in Jamaica, Long Island, son of Samuel Mills, removed thence by 1742 to Morristown, New Jersey, and died there 4 March 1803, aged 85 years, leaving a widow Phebe Mills who died 21 July 1808, aged 86 years. (a) The house here considered is certainly of the colonial period of design, circa 1740, as is evidenced by the heavily molded mantels with panelled overmantels and cornice in the simplified version of Georgian precedent and its erection accordingly can be ascribed to this Timothy Mills who was 22 years old in that year, especially as his son John Mills owned it as late as 1834. Probate upon his estate does not appear in the County records, from which fact it would appear that he had disposed of it among his children by ante mortem deeds of gift.

John Mills born 25 February 1746 in Morristown, son of Capt. Timothy Mills abovesaid, died there 24 September 1837 aged 91 years, having married 10 November 1768, Cleo Wines who died 26 September 1813 aged 63 years, daughter of Isaiah Wines. (a) He was a trustee of the First Presbyterian Church of Morristown. Administration upon the estate of John Mills deceased intestate was granted 21 October 1837. He is the first owner of this house who is definitely of record as such, but the house is obviously older than him. Apparently, he succeeded his father in the ownership of this house, but by what actual means of conveyance does not appear.

By a deed of 4 June 1834, John Mills abovenamed conveyed to (his eldest son) Silas Mills a 38 acre tract in Morristown, reciting title from (his father) Timothy Mills by a Deed of 10 December 1770.

(a) The record of the First Presbyterian Church of Morristown, N. J., publ. 1880-1885, part II, page 161

Previously by a deed of 10 February 1798, this John Mills of Morris Township and County conveyed to this son Silas Mills of the same place for 350 pounds "counting dollars at eight shillings each", a lot of 5.3 acres there (being the homestead here surveyed), having a frontage of some 675 feet on the south side of the road (now Early Street) and extending thence south to Mill Brook, "with all and singular the profits, privileges" etc., without however particularly mentioning the house thereon, and without reciting his title to the property.

Silas Mills, the grantee last named above was born in Morristown (and evidently in this house), on 23 January 1770, eldest son of John Mills as stated. He died therein 15 February 1846 aged 76 years, intestate, having married firstly, on 4 October 1797, Irene Lindsly who died 9 May 1811 aged 40 years, and he married second, 3 November 1811, Eunice Johnson, who died 2 January 1852 aged 77 years. By his first marriage he had a son Ezra Mills, born 16 September 1799, who died 1 May 1872 having married 7 January 1824 Sarah Burnet, and by his second marriage a son John J. Mills, the next owner of this house, of whom further. After the death of this Silas Mills, in a division of his real estate between his two sons by a deed of 18 March 1846, Ezra Mills of Morris Township with wife Sarah conveyed to his half brother John J. Mills of same place, "all the homestead of the said deceased, except a lot of about one acre and eighty hundreds of an acre from the easterly side thereof set off to the said Ezra Mills and released and conveyed to him by the said John J. Mills by deed bearing same date herewith", but including "the Mansion House, shop, and outbuildings of the deceased," describing the tract as bounded north by the "road leading from Bridge Street in Morristown by the house of Silas D. Corey to the late residence of Silas Mills deceased, west by the "road leading from the residence of David Mills by the house of Ezra Mills to the turnpike road by Uzal Condicts", south by the turnpike, and east by the lands of Lewis Phoenix.

John J. Mills, who thus became the next owner of the house of his father, was born 13 July 1815, son of Silas Mills and his second wife, Eunice Johnson. He died in Morristown and evidently in this house, 15 April 1888 without issue, having married Eliza Pierson. His will devised all his estate to one Isaiah Searles of Schooley's Mountain, Morris County, but the three surviving children and three grandchildren of his half brother Ezra Mills, deceased, filed a caveat against the will and Searles settled with them for one half the estate, by an agreement of 9 July 1888. Thus by a deed of 9 March 1889 he purchased from these claimants the house and lot here considered.

After the death of this Isaiah Searles, late of Washington Township, Morris County, his executors conveyed to his widow, Margaret D. Searles, of the same place, for \$3800 the price bid at auction, this house and lot, describing it as having 254 feet frontage on the southeast side of Mills Street and 208 feet on the south side of Early Street, in Morristown, and as being part of the land of which John J. Mills died possessed. The widow Searles conveyed the same to Robertson D. and Benjamin L. Searles, both of Morristown, and to William A. Searles of Washington Township, by her deed of 2 June 1909. The last two grantees transferred their shares to the first on 5 May 1910, as also did Charles E. Searles of Summit, Union County, by his deed of same date.

#### Bibliography:

A search of the title in Morris County  
Land and Probate records by Cornelius  
Mc Phillips, H. A. N. S. title abstractor

*Lewis H. Cook*  
Supervising Historian

Approved:

*Seymour Williams*  
SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.  
District Officer

*File*